

Land as a Birthright

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Moving eastward across Northern Greece, I learned from the agricultural officials of Serrai (in Macedonia) that more and more unwilling people there were being forced to get rid of their farms and go down to the cities. This is not because of any lack of love for the soil but because the yields in the mountainous areas make it impossible to earn a living. Economic necessity has forced a change of location, but not yet a change in attitude. One official compared Macedonia and Thessaly, with respect to attachment for the land: "I would say that there has been much greater security through the years in Thessaly, which has led to more fondness for their fields; here in Northern Greece the constant uprooting of families has created an uneasiness and therefore a tendency for people to part with their land." [178 423 432 166 511]

In Thrace, farther eastward, the peasant is still attached to the soil but "he is not stuck to it absolutely body and soul," as one peasant expressed it. These areas of Macedonia and parts of Thrace depend largely on growing Oriental tobacco, a commodity sometimes moving slowly on world markets, with agricultural depression a serious consequence. Here the man-land bond is loosening. [249 439 458 511 167]

The peasants living at the head of the Chalkidike peninsula (central Macedonia) around Polygyros, the capital of the prefecture, enjoy relative prosperity and are not willing to leave their land. Nor is there any desire to emigrate, although five or six families have sent sons to Italy to study agriculture and veterinary science in the expectation that they would return better prepared to improve agriculture and kindred pursuits.

In the rich plains of Thessaly, south from Macedonia, the mechanization of agriculture is apparent everywhere. When harvests are good, people are optimistic about the future, secure about their food supply. Peasants there have invested heavily in tractors, which have had an interesting effect on attitudes toward the land. In this area of good soil, where scientific farming is increasingly practiced, the basis of the attachment is changing from the traditional idea of land ownership as a sacred trust closely bound in with the fortune of one's immediate family to a view of land as a source of financial gain. Here in Thessaly the rural man is changing from peasant to farmer, in contrast to the hard-pressed people in the northern mountains who are forced to move to cities for bread and, far away from their land, still cling to peasant values. [241 242 166]

When a peasant in Central Greece was asked what a family from his village would do if it received \$500 from America, he said: "A man would be more apt to buy fields rather than improve his home; of course, if his house leaks and he has enough land, he would start with the house but, generally speaking, a peasant from my village thinks it more important to own more land than to build a big house. Of course, we do have another [454] •

178 type among us — the 'chewer' who would squander the \$500 right and
423 left in the hope that the next year the cousin in the United States would
432 send some more money in answer to a plea of distress!"

Here, then, is what one might call an illustration of a normal process of
454 change in attitude, the peasant becoming the farmer. When the house
369 rather than the accumulation of more land begins to be stressed, the farmer
is moving to "city ways." Throughout the south, in the Peloponnesos, the
younger people seem more ready to move cityward than do their elders,
who still insist that one should hold onto the land.

166 In Northern Greece when there is a shift from the land the whole family,
593 young and old, moves together, whereas in the Peloponnesos the young
people make the move on their own. This seems to indicate that when the
traditional attitude toward land changes, another basic change in peasant
life is occurring — in family relationships.* However, everywhere in the
463 southern villages, as elsewhere in the country, the village shopkeeper,
barber, shoemaker, and other artisans, as well as the priest, all own land
which they farm if they can find the time; if not, some member of their
family works it instead.

178 On the basis, then, of dozens of interviews — only a small sampling
423 has been quoted — carried out in thirteen thousand miles of travel in the
432 provinces, some generalizations may be attempted. Wide regional varia-
tions are apparent. One may generalize, though conscious of many excep-
184 tions, that peasants on fairly good soil which they work with their time-
114 honored methods by hand and not by machines hold strongly to the belief
166 that the earth and the earth alone is their treasure and their great security.
On the other hand, where peasants in Northern Greece and elsewhere live
in areas frequently troubled by war, or on marginal land, they will re-
luctantly accept a chance to move away from their family fields — even
to the cities. But those who sold their land before the war and lost all of
their money because of devaluation now appreciate the worth of land even
more. In the fertile plains where mechanization has come, the attitude to-
ward land corresponds more to that in Western Europe and the United
States: it becomes a commodity rather than a part of the family heritage.

369 In areas of high education and of long-time contact with the city, such as
in much of the Peloponnesos or in Attica, the urban values and attitudes as
to land and family have so permeated the thinking of the young that they
prefer nonfarm work when this can be found, abandoning the emphasis
their elders still place upon "the good earth" as treasure, security, and
heritage.⁵

THE CYCLE OF LAND OWNERSHIP (ATTICA)

423 Whatever the quality of the villager's attachment to his fields is now, he
369 always has had, and still has, an intimacy with his fields that the city

241 near Thebes in Central Greece, had this to say: "The coming of a tractor
461 will 'rest a family.' They will have better yields due to more systematic
178 treatment and better plowing. Before, people had to work ten hours a day
462 while with a tractor they need to work from five to six hours at a maximum.
The fact that they have to work less brings joy to the house, for a person
who is rested has more of a mood for gaiety than one who is tired. The
women certainly are helped for they do not have to be in the fields and can
occupy themselves more with housework, with clothes, and can have more
time for amusement."

241 Elsewhere I asked, "What difference does the machine make?" The di-
178 rector of the Larissa agricultural school answered this way:

Twenty years ago this area around Larissa was in large *tsiflikia*, or estates,
belonging to a very few families, which produced chiefly sheep. With the ex-
propriation and redistribution of land there was a trend toward wheat, corn,
alfalfa, so much so that even the slopes where the sheep once grazed are now
cultivated.

[407] Today Thessaly is the most mechanized area of Greece. In 1940 the plain
around Larissa had 160 tractors; now the number is well over 1300. [Greece in
1952 had 3400 tractors and in 1956 over 12,000 compared with 1700 in
1938.]

[727] The war, the occupation, and the guerrilla conflict brought an equality in
[492] that everyone lost their animals. Then, those who were able to buy tractors —
[423] chiefly those who had had the animals before the war — gained an economic
advantage. Before mechanization the peasant used to toil and sweat over his
land and get very little from it; now with mechanization people become more
attached to the land since they see that they can make a profit from it. Those
who before would have sold now hold on to it. The merchants in town complain
[454] that there is a crisis, but there is none really, for the peasant is putting all of
his spare money into fields and more equipment. Now he is farming in a sci-
entific way.

At this point his wife, who had been sitting in the living room with us,
began to speak. She owned some land which she had not visited for three
years because of illness. When she did visit the peasants who worked this
land for her, she found that they were telling her all kinds of things that
she needed to do — to use fertilizer, which they had formerly thought un-
necessary, and machinery, with which they had been unacquainted before.
She attributed much of the recent adoption of machinery to the great move-
ment of people during the war.

[476] Her husband then pointed out that today there was a greater and finer
spirit of competition among the farmers than formerly, for they try to see
[461] who can get a greater yield. Mechanization leaves them more time for edu-
cation and learning about new practices. It used to take a whole day for a
peasant to plow less than an acre with two horses but now he can do ten

The Peasant at Work

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HARVESTING OLIVES IN SOUTHERN GREECE

During my travels in Greece I have passed countless olive trees, for they hug the coasts, crowd the islands, and thrive inland where the climate is mild enough. But I never really understood the significance of the olive tree until I visited an estate in Southern Greece where three thousand trees of about seven varieties provided the only income. 245

I had already learned that over 12 percent of the caloric intake of the Greek people came from olives or olive oil; that Greece produced in 1948-1950 an annual average of 47,000 metric tons of table olives, chiefly in Thessaly and Central Greece; that the smaller oil olives, grown elsewhere in the country, accounted for 103,000 metric tons annually of this precious oil, which was bought and stored as a financial reserve whenever the currency became the least bit shaky. The oil olives also produced another 12,000 tons of residue oil. Friends had said that olive growing was a story of "from rags to riches," since one year might bring an outstanding crop and the next a disastrously poor one,* but that this was one of the accepted features of growing olives. [146] [454] [458]

Some inquiring students think the olive was in Greece before the goddess Athena, with whom it is so closely associated in myth, and was originally associated with the cult of Erechtheus. Be that as it may, the olive — the "All-Dewy One" — has held a special place in the tradition of the Greek people. They have also come to know that olive growing is much more than storytelling or the writing of descriptive poetry; it is hard work. In Thessaly, around the Gulf of Volos, it was interesting to watch men plow underneath the trees and fertilize the soil to increase the olive crop; to see on the western coast of Greece and in the Peloponnesos how the peasants irrigated the fifteen to twenty trees that each might own, thereby adding to the quality and the size of the fruit. In Attica one could watch the men expertly trimming the tree so that it would bunch as it grew, making harvesting a simpler task. In the Ionian Islands, where the air is humid and growth more lush, the trees reached much higher, causing the people there to wait for the olives to fall after ripening rather than pick them directly from the tree. "A lazy man's way," said a mainland peasant. [824]

Like many things of importance, the olive harvest has a slow beginning. In October, walking through the olive groves of this estate, one could see the table varieties beginning to ripen. The Kalamata olive was one. At first, the few workers on the estate gather the olives falling to the ground, but within a week's time they begin to gather some from the trees. It is then that the girls from the surrounding villages make their gay appearance. Not many are married, for this would show that their husbands were [464]

* Compared to the 1959-60 figure of 156,000 tons of oil, 1960-61 showed 73,000 tons.

583 articles of clothing, such as undergarments, which the rude looms cannot
 [432] suitably fashion. Women have been urged since early childhood to get up at
 [461] break of day and work on these trousseaus for themselves or for their
 daughters long before it was time to go out to the fields.

[511] Most families have a common fund from which expenditures are to be
 [594] made for dowry items. From time to time, husbands and wives quarrel
 over the use of further funds for the dowry, since the man will claim that
 the daughter already has enough household items and linens or sufficient
 [554] sovereigns, but the wife will not agree. As the girl approaches marriageable
 age, most people in the village have a shrewd way of sizing up just what
 dowry she will bring, and the local girls are even roughly ranked along this
 [581] line. Nevertheless, in discussing the desirability of some young woman,
 people are quick to mention her family background, what a good worker
 she is, and other personal qualities which may favor her. A girl will start
 [883] accumulating her dowry as a serious pursuit from her tenth year on, but
 no final decision will be made as to the exact amount of land or money she
 will bring to her husband until some young man seeks her out, or the family
 begins in earnest to try to marry her off. Family fortunes can vary too much
 to permit a decision of this sort very far in advance. At times, the exact
 [584] amount is the subject of bargaining, for the young man may ask for what-
 ever sum he wants and the young woman's parents will tell what they can
 give. If a mutually satisfactory sum is reached, then the engagement is an-
 nounced.

[464] In those villages where there are active contacts with some city, the
 [454] family may find it necessary to send a daughter there to help earn her
 dowry (for instance, if there are three daughters in a family). As early as
 eight years of age, she may be sent to some relatives and gradually accumu-
 [426] late a sufficient sum from her meager wages. Some parents may borrow
 money for the dowry from some richer relative without interest, but seldom
 from outsiders. If necessary, too, they may sell some land to get the re-
 [626] quired amount. Now and then a well-to-do man may arrange to marry a
 [183] girl without demanding a dowry and this gives the village something to talk
 about for quite a while. Or some young men were encountered, particu-
 larly in the Peloponnesos, who fall in love with a girl and then try to find
 out a way to get a house built even though the girl has no dowry. Such
 variations illustrate that, even in a society with patriarchal overtones, one
 finds in rural Greece the belief that "love will find a way," whether it means
 persuading recalcitrant parents to give their permission or accumulating
 the wherewithal to buy a house so one can marry. And although there are
 [602] mercenary overtones to any dowry agreement, it is the general rule that
 parents are trying to look out for their daughter's welfare to the best of
 their ability, that they are anticipating the in-law relationships — very im-
 portant in Greece — with the parents and relatives of their daughter's
 husband.

178 they have heard. Many of these are not forced on the villagers, nor even urged upon them, but have some appeal which causes men, women, and young people to experiment with them. If they give satisfaction, then they become incorporated in the general social patterns. To trace these changes due to social drift would be a review of what has been written so far, yet the comparison of the descriptions by adults of life in their villages when they were young with what one observes there today indicates that over a period of time innovations, both social and technological, reached these villages, were adopted by the bolder individuals, and were imitated in time by others. Within recent years the tempo of change in rural Greece has been speeded up. The Bishop of Messenia, already referred to in the discussion of religion, observed:¹

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People have now raised their standard of living well above their possibility to pay. They want running water in their home, city clothes, and modern furniture. They don't go into debt necessarily to obtain these things, but they have stopped saving as they used to do. When they have money, they spend it; they don't save it. They have made very great strides in education. They all want a road right up to their village so automobiles can reach them; they all want electricity. The changes which would have normally taken fifty years are now compressed into ten.

Greece, therefore, is a good example of the rising level of expectations going on among rural people the world over. Through the "percolation" of ideas and impressions into the rural areas, many people are demanding what the city person has long taken for granted: education, a road to one's door, electricity, and running water.

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Many factors enter into the decisions by village people to do something new. Population increase or decrease affects life in rural areas. With an increase, the father has to divide his patrimony among more children, with the result that farms get smaller, less efficient, and people approach the poverty line if offsetting measures are not found. With population loss, those who are left have to make many new adjustments.

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A study made by two Dutch geographers, de Vooy and Piket, during April and May 1957, of two villages in the Peloponnesos showed the connection between population (viewed as labor supply) and social change. The residents of one community, on the edge of the Argos Plain, produce tobacco, olives, and grain, and also raise sheep. The economy is thus transitional, between the economy of the plains and that of the mountains. After analyzing the labor requirements of this community and weighing the gains from introduction of modern farm technology, the geographers conclude:

A burning question in the under-developed countries is how to increase prosperity. As a matter of course, enlargement of the very small holdings would be considered the solution where the agrarian sector is concerned. But even if a

Social Consequences of Foreign Aid

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commercial farmer. To be sure, the peasant does use some money, and some colonial powers in the past have found that the way to persuade "natives" to grow cash crops that the authorities wanted for export was to require that taxes be paid in money rather than in kind. To get the money, the peasant had to put in some cash crop, and he eventually moved toward commercial farming. Both types of farmers periodically become involved in debt: the peasant because he wants to spend an extravagant amount on some village festival, wedding, dowry, pilgrimage, or other noneconomic expenditure, whereas the modern farmer — though he also may try to keep up with the Joneses — goes into debt to buy machinery and other capital equipment. The peasant in earlier days went to the village moneylender, whose rates were oppressively high since he as a debtor could give little collateral, but now under government auspices credit cooperatives are moving out to the villages to provide loans to the villager on his livestock or an expected harvest. The modern farmer uses the financial institutions which are an integral part of a complex economy.

The production for a market highlights another difference. The peasant is primarily oriented toward the present; the modern farmer thinks of the future. The peasant, because he has had little economic margin with which to experiment or accumulate, tries to get through one crop year at a time. He may think vaguely about the future in terms of the hopes he has for his children, but seldom in hardheaded economic terms. When he begins to put out vines, to plant olive trees, or to make capital investment connected with agricultural production, the peasant is changing into a farmer — in this one trait, at least.

Both the peasant and the farmer operate in terms of what they consider to be their own self-interest, but they differ in their conceptions of what their self-interest is. The so-called obstinacy of the peasant is not just irrational opposition to change for the sake of holding back progress; it arises from his refusal to believe that the innovation suggested is to his own self-interest. Many times the peasant shrewdness shows up when some new scientific practice fails because of the soil and weather conditions of a given area. Demonstration, rather than talk, works more effectively with the peasant. The farmer, on the other hand, is more willing to take the word of the agricultural specialist, whether spoken or written, and may even do some experimenting on his own. If he is moderately successful, he has a margin for experimentation, whereas the peasant's food supply or source of the cash that he needs would be jeopardized if the innovation proved unsuccessful. Rather than fly to evils that he "knows not of," he sticks with the ways that have helped his people survive through the centuries.

This same conservatism shows up in the peasant's attitude toward his land. The peasant prizes land above all else, whereas the farmer views it as a commodity to be bought and sold. Land has been the peasant's secur-

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184 ity; if he has a few acres available to him he knows that he can put in a crop
423 and maintain life; without land he is helpless. That is why many peasants
454 will insist on buying more land when they get a sum of money. The modern
farmer, on the other hand, views land as only one of the factors of production. He can be quite impersonal toward particular patches of land, whereas in some countries the peasants feel closely attached to family acres handed down through two, three, or more generations. Peasant fathers, too, feel a strong sense of obligation to pass on to their children the patrimony of land intact, if possible. At times, this is even more important than providing the children with an education or a respectable dwelling. The modern farmer may feel much more security in the cash balances in the bank or in the improvements made on the land he has rather than the acquisition of more land simply for the sake of adding acreage to his estate.

178 Perhaps the most visible contrasts, as one passes from a peasant farming
241 belt to one of modern farms, is the presence of machinery in the latter.
594 The peasant relies on family labor to help not only with ordinary daily tasks
184 but as much as possible to meet the needs at peak periods, such as harvest
464 time. Any money given to outsiders who help is that much taken away
from the family exchequer. This means that a peasant with many children is considered blessed over one with few, for the many sons especially are economic assets, though daughters help until they are married off as members of their husbands' family labor reserve. As Chapter 5 has shown, the purchase of a tractor by a Greek farm family ushers in numerous changes. Arthur Mosher, who is familiar with agriculture both in the Far East and in Latin America, points out the following consequences of shifting from family labor to machinery.* First, by reducing the labor requirements it frees members of the family for work in the city and may even necessitate their search for employment away from the village — a fact which introduces change into what may have been a closed family circle. Second, there is sometimes a change in status of the sons and younger men of the family who, unlike the older men, know how to operate the newly acquired machine. In peasant families, where the word of the older people, especially the father, has been law and where there is supposed to be unquestioned obedience to his directives, the emergence of a new technical "authority" in the family is bound to produce changes in the family relationships. A third effect of mechanization treated by Mosher is the creation of greater socioeconomic disparity between large and small farms, since mechanization is usually more economical on large farms. This tendency of the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer is sometimes offset, however, by the poorer farmers pooling their resources and setting up a small joint-ownership group, similar to some of the threshing "rings" of the American Midwest a generation or so ago. Or the small farmers may get the advantages of mechanization if the machines can be rented to them when needed,

28 THE FAMILY: ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

249 night. In October, the dried tobacco is pressed into bales by machines the
221 farmers have for the purpose, and is then ready for sale.

407 A farmer can get 720 *okadhes* of tobacco from 6 *stremata* of land, and
433 if he succeeds in selling the entire crop at 30 drachmas an *oka*, he receives the
434 equivalent of \$720. This is a very good income, indeed, especially when it is
added to that derived from cotton.

471 Vasilika farmers are obviously in need of some capitalization to finance
241 what have become considerable investments necessary for producing their wheat,
454 cotton, and tobacco. Whether or not the farmers' savings would be adequate to
652 finance their crops, the fact is that Vasilika farmers do not want to use their
[583] accumulated savings to invest in their own farms. Cash drachma savings are
[556] exchanged for gold English sovereigns or French or Italian specie, which ac-
cumulations are then set aside for the dowries of the girls of the family or to
pay for the education of a son. The only notable exception to this use of savings
is that the farmer who becomes wealthy enough to feel that his obligations to his
children are taken care of may buy land if the opportunity presents itself. At
the same time that the farmer does not want to spend savings on the current pro-
duction of his crops, he is eager for an increased cash income to secure the future
of his children. Increased cash income is possible only through investment in
his farm. How does he get out of the dilemma? He willingly accepts credit from
[242] the Agricultural Bank of Greece. In addition, farmers accept from the bank the
needed seed, artificial fertilizers, and chemical weed killers and insect sprays.
March is the month in which the loans are made by the bank, so that the farmers
always receive their money before Easter. Both the manager of the Agricultural
Bank in Levadhia and we were aware of the fact that some of the money was
used for Easter finery and Easter feasting. We had the impression that the
farmers considered the loan as cash income to be spent as they wished. The re-
payments of principle and interest due in October were viewed by the farmers
as something like an additional expense or tax chargeable against current income
from the produce, and in this sense, not as expenditure of savings.

Miscellaneous Crops

244 Each household maintains a small kitchen garden near the cotton fields.
This location permits the farmers to irrigate and to tend to the garden at the
[462] same time they work with the cotton. Both men and women work in the gardens
to raise tomatoes, eggplant, cucumbers, squash, and melons of various kinds,
but only to the extent necessary for immediate consumption by the household
[433] and its hired farm labor through the growing season. No effort is made to
produce surplus for canning or for any other kind of home processing. Besides
the summer vegetable gardens, in the early spring, the women of a few house-
holds fence off a rectangular area near the houses and plant spring onions,
[417] lettuce, spinach, and a type of lima bean called *kukya*. The wire or reed fence

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The Family: Consumption Habits

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[454] INCREASED INCOME resulting from technological advances in Vasilika has given the present generation in the village a wider choice of alternatives for allotting their resources than that enjoyed by their predecessors. The first call upon the family's income, after the needs of subsistence, is felt to be the accumulation of a dowry for the daughters and (since there is rarely land enough for all) the provision of an education or apprentice-training for all the sons except the one or two who could eventually be provided with enough land to farm profitably. The process by which these obligations are fulfilled is the subject of the next chapter. Here, our concern is with the goods and services used by the villagers, with particular emphasis on the overtones of meaning that accompany them.

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[556] The differences among the households of Vasilika in furnishings, foods, clothing, and hospitality patterns are not great on an absolute scale, but the small differences have, on the local scale, as much significance to the people of Vasilika as the corresponding differences do in any middle-class suburb in the United States. Family self-respect is maintained, and family rivalries are carried on in the village partly by demonstrating levels of taste through consumption habits.

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369 What the villagers admire and try to emulate are standards of living and of taste as they perceive them to exist in the towns and cities. Their knowledge of these standards is acquired through the first-hand information brought back by their town relatives and by what they themselves notice on their own visits to urban centers.

The base to which the new standards are adapted, or for which they are substituted, is a set of patterns for rural living customary in the Boeotian countryside.

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sometimes use their meager cash resources on plastic tablecloths or new clothes, as a token of their participation in the battle for prestige.

One important characteristic of the changes in the villagers' consumption habits is that virtually all the substitutions and additions require the villagers to dip into their cash resources. In this respect, the new needs act as a spur to the cash crop economy of the settlement and provide motivation for more efficient farming. Increased efficiency in farming adds to income and it becomes possible to finance still more innovations. The extent to which this kind of interrelated process can continue is, of course, dependent on world markets for the villagers' produce, on the level of economic activity in the entire Greek nation, and, more specifically, on the extent to which the population no longer needed on the farms can be productively employed in the towns and cities. The inheritance and dowry system of Vasilika's residents is central to this matter and is the subject of the next chapter.

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54 · THE FAMILY: DOWRY AND INHERITANCE

584 from the village or from the community of the prospective spouse, rather than a professional. On the groom's side, the father participates in the negotiations, but the prospective groom himself is present and active in the proceedings. His decision as to the minimum value of the dowry and the form in which he will accept it is the crucial one.

The dowry negotiations and the final marriage contract can be usefully discussed, therefore, as analogous to a commercial transaction in which each side tries to get the most value at the least cost. For the bride's father, the material costs include the land and cash he must give as part of his daughter's dowry. 583 She is, of course, legally and customarily entitled to her share of the patrimony, 428 but except for the cash, the determination of just how much is her share is not 423 easy to arrive at. A farmer, as we have seen, holds land in scattered parcels of different quality; some of the parcels are in the immediate vicinity of Vasilika, no more than an hour's walk away from the village; others may have been part of his wife's dowry and may, therefore, be near her village; his house has value, but since his daughter will not live with him, he cannot give her part of it. The problem is solved in Vasilika by making a rough estimate of the money value of the parents' property in terms of gold sovereigns (*liras*) and then determining how many *liras* a girl is entitled to. Since the end of the Greek Civil War in [436] 1949, the drachma has been stabilized, and the villagers as well as the rest of [454] the Greek population are gaining confidence in the currency. However, the belief that gold sovereigns, worth approximately \$10 each in 1961, are the only trustworthy form of cash is still common in Greece, as is the hoarding of the sovereigns and the requirement that bills be paid in them. The villagers evaluate [435] property in terms of *liras* and always speak of a dowry as one of so many *liras*, regardless of whether the property transferred is cash or land or both.

Besides the property costs of the dowry, a farmer loses the labor of his 593 daughter both on the farm and in the household. Finally, there is an emotional 152 cost to the parents, particularly to the mother, at the marriage of a daughter. A mother loses the companionship of a friend, a confidante, and a working partner in the house and the fields. Among the more prosperous farmers, girls marry in [582] their middle or late twenties. As a result mothers frequently have had many years of cooperation with grown daughters. The wrench at parting is seriously felt. Mothers in Vasilika openly lament the loss of their daughters and speak frequently of how much they miss their absent girls.

When a marriage is contemplated between families of equal wealth and social position, for example, when the daughter of a farmer is being married to 581 a man who expects to stay on his father's farm, and when his share of the farm 584 has approximately the same value as what the girl brings in as a dowry, the negotiations are relatively straightforward. Each side can then limit itself to checking on the claims the other is making and to surveying the total situation. Is the yield of the land the girl is bringing what her father says it is? Will the son-in-law be entitled to the share of the land he claims he will have? Does the [593] boy have so many sisters that his father may die before they have been married off leaving the boy with the responsibility of dowering them? Is the father-in-law's house well enough equipped so that the girl will be able to live at approxi-

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mately the standard she had at home? How many brothers does the groom have who are also going to be farmers and who will, therefore, have to share the house itself, or for whom some housing provision must eventually be made? Because personal qualities of the prospective groom will influence the success with which he manages his own and his dower properties, a father asks whether the groom has a reputation for industriousness. Is there any danger that the groom will "eat" the dowry properties, as the villagers phrase a propensity for using capital resources for current needs or for luxuries? Are the groom's father and brothers sober men who will conserve property and work to get the best income from it?

In short, the bride's father wants to assure, insofar as he is able, the future well-being of his daughter and of her children. He also wants the emotional satisfaction of having been successful at making a good arrangement for her. One village father pointed to a field we were passing and explained that he had given it to his daughter as part of her *prika* (dowry), so that all the cotton from the field was for his grandson. He then went on to say that he had married his daughter well and said of his three-year-old grandson, "Who knows, one day he might become a lawyer or a doctor. He has a brain, the little one." The implication was that he, the farmer, had contributed to whatever the final destiny of his grandson might be by having supplied such good fields for his daughter's dowry.

A girl's parents also want assurance that she will live in a congenial household. They hope that the new mother-in-law and the groom's sisters will accept the girl with good grace and that she will be decently treated. A man's wife and daughter will always remind him of the resources the family has already expended on the trousseau and the skill with which they were woven. From the women's point of view, these are important parts of the cost, and they want a girl to go to a family which will appreciate both the quantity and the fine workmanship of the *rukha*. Some friction between a girl and her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law is accepted in Vasilika as part of the condition of marriage to a farmer. The severity of friction is mitigated, however, by the independent dignity a girl acquires by having brought her husband a dowry and by the pride her husband's family takes in their own skill at having helped arrange a good marriage for their son.

The groom's interest, on the other hand, is to supplement his patrimony with as much land and cash as he can get from his wife's dowry. After their marriage, the husband and wife will have jurisdiction over her dowry properties. Unless the marriage contract states otherwise, and it rarely does in marriages between a farmer and a village girl, the husband has the right to the management and control of movable and personal property that he received with his wife and the management of the real estate given as part of the dowry. The alienation of movable dower property requires only the informal consent of his wife, while the alienation of real estate requires a formal notarized consent statement from his wife and the permission of the court (Civil Code Sections 1416 and 1417). (The groom's father, therefore, is interested only from the standpoint of the general welfare of his son. He himself will have no direct control over his daughter-in-law's land or money.)

DISPOSITION OF DOWER PROPERTY · 39

lives in his wife's village and has married a girl from his own settlement and, therefore, has land near the groom's village. A farmer husband may even be willing to consider the sale of the land in his wife's village to make a good purchase nearer home. Neither of these possibilities may come to fruition for years, so that they may remain subjects for long-term discussion between a man and his father- and brothers-in-law. To summarize the situation, land given as one part of the dowry and village exogamy have the consequence of stimulating land exchanges and sales in the Boeotian countryside, of stimulating the visits of men among the villages in the region with a consequent exchange of views and ideas, and of providing an economic focus for maintaining some kind of relationships between affinal relatives, that is relatives by marriage. The system of transferring land as dowry has the effect also of permitting a man to utilize his wife's property throughout his married life instead of having to wait to do so until after his wife's father's death.

The actions of the villagers and the tone in which they discuss these questions suggest that although there is some sentiment attached to the land inherited from a father and to the land that were parts of a mother's dowry, the symbolic value of particular parcels of land as a link between generations does not usually take precedence over the economic value of the land as an income and food producer.

We have still to consider the question of the ultimate disposition of dower properties in marriages between farmers. The Greek Civil Code states that dower property must be accounted for separately from that owned or eventually inherited by the husband, and as we have seen, stipulates that the consent of the wife is required before dower property can be sold or exchanged. If there is a divorce, the wife is entitled to the return of the dower property or of its equivalent. In the house of the groom's father, the newly married couple is given a room in which they and, later, their children sleep. Here the bride's trousseau gives the room a personal touch. Both the young people work on the farm holdings of the groom's father along with his father, mother, and brothers, and unmarried sisters. They also work on the young wife's dower lands. The income from these may be pooled with that from the paternal holdings but need not be. The young husband's father has jurisdiction over the ordinary living expenses of the entire household and distributes the cash needed for purchases of clothing, food, and household equipment. During the lifetime of his father, the cash portion of the dowry may be invested by the son in additional land or in some other capital equipment such as a diesel pump. Under no circumstances do the villagers consider it proper to sell dower lands or to use dower funds for ordinary living expenses. Only the need for money for a very serious illness or for some other emergency is felt to justify such action. In whatever form, the dowry is considered capital which may be invested or saved to add to the estate available for the newly married couple's children.

After the death of the husband's father, the young man continues to live with his brothers, most of whom are likely to be married by now, until they decide to separate and divide the patrimony. This now consists of the property their father inherited from his father's patrimony, the dower property of their

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66 THE FAMILY: DOWRY AND INHERITANCE

professor who has become the principal of his gymnasium. In 1961, however, the son of a rather prosperous village farmer became attracted to a daughter of another Vasilika farmer with good land holdings. The young man asked his father to arrange the marriage for him, and, since all the conditions were entirely suitable, the young couple were engaged.

The trend in favor of town husbands prevails, however, among most of those who can afford it. Once a few girls had married urban men, the rivalry between village families led to greater efforts to secure town husbands for the others. Consequently, there has been an inflation in dowries which is alarming the villagers themselves. In the early 1950's, a *prika* worth \$3,000 was enough for a town husband of no special prestige; by the late 1950's, the same kind of man was asking for one worth \$4,500.

The inflation has had several consequences. Often the value of the dowry can no longer be limited to the share of the inheritance to which a girl is entitled. Farming sons are willing to give up some portion of their shares so that their sisters can "live well," as they put it. The brothers gain also from the added prestige and influence of the family. These in turn may make it possible for them to find a girl with a larger dowry than their property qualifications might warrant. A farmer so situated may make higher demands on the ground that his and his wife's children will have an urban aunt and uncle. The town sister might provide board for her nephews and nieces (girls are increasingly being sent to gymnasium) while they are in school and can also be expected to help them find jobs.

Another consequence of the dowry inflation is the increasingly late age of marriage for the village girls and the town men. It takes farmers longer to accumulate the larger amounts of cash for the dowry, and the prospective grooms longer to attain a position or income at least partially commensurate. Vasilika's girls who marry town men are usually between twenty-five and thirty. Those whose fathers have few land holdings, and consequently can offer only small dowries, have been marrying farmers from other villages or within Vasilika itself and have been in their early twenties at the time of the engagement.

Now let us consider the disposition of the dowry which goes with a girl marrying a town husband. First, if he accepts land as part of the dowry, he will of necessity have it worked by his wife's male relatives. In time, however, often by the end of the first decade of the marriage, the son-in-law may wish to expand his shop, or may wish to start building a house for himself or for his daughter's dowry, or may hear of a good investment opportunity. He will want money for these purposes, and so he begins, with his wife's consent and after consultation with her father, to arrange for the sale of dowry lands. Since the 1950's, prospective town grooms have been less willing to take land which they know they will eventually want to sell, and have been asking for cash or for a house in town. Anticipating this situation, several of Vasilika's farmers who have small daughters have begun to use their savings and even to sell a little land in order to build houses in Athens or in a provincial town so that by the time their daughters are ready to marry, the houses will provide the main portion of the dowry.

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CONSEQUENCES OF THE DOWRY SYSTEM · 67

of the dowry. Rents are high and earnings relatively low in cities so that houses are a good investment. However, since building materials must be bought, and contractors paid, in cash, the houses may take many years to build. The young couple may then move into the habitable shell, and the rest of the dwelling will be completed out of the farmer's then current income. This kind of dowry-on-the-installment-plan becomes part of the marriage contract. It is often a source not only of continuing long-term discussions between a farmer and his town son-in-law, but also a source of quarrels—what in Greece are called *fasaries*.

The rate of movement of farmers' daughters into the towns and cities has been accelerating in the last decade, but marriages to urban husbands are not a new phenomenon. Between 1930 and 1950, at least five of Vasilika's women married "into Athens."

This type of marriage, like those discussed above in which both bride and groom are members of farm families, accelerates land sales and exchanges. The network of association which develops between Vasilika's residents and their relatives in Athens and the towns, is, however, perhaps the most important consequence of the urban marriages of village women (Friedl 1959a). In addition to the economic reasons for continuing relationships, there are several customary patterns which increase the frequency of contacts between the two groups. Lonely village mothers are grateful for visits from their married daughters and their grandchildren, and the midsummer season not uncommonly finds city women with their children back in the village visiting their parents, often for as long as a month or two. A return to one's village for Easter, sometimes for most of the Holy Week as well, is a well-known pattern in Greece. *Paniyiri* in one's *patridha* (home village) is another occasion for visiting.

Journeys in the opposite direction also occur with some frequency. Village men and women, when ill, may enter hospitals in a town in which they have sons or daughters, or brothers or sisters. Village men visit their town brothers and bring their children; occasionally a child spends a summer with his town aunt or uncle. Visits to the village or to the town usually last several days. They are made possible by still another congruent pattern of Greek culture. Neither the villagers nor their town relatives seem to have any strong need for personal privacy. Visiting relatives are bedded down on pallets when there are not enough regular beds, and it is not considered either indecent or especially uncomfortable for one or even two families to sleep in the same room. It is through this intervisiting process that so many urban traits of culture are introduced to the villagers and, indeed, that some village patterns are conserved in urban areas.

An additional consequence of the town marriages of village girls is that rural wealth derived from land flows into the cities. This wealth is an addition to what the productivity of land normally contributes to urban centers in the form of food, taxes, and the export of rural produce. A portion of the farmer's profits, through the dowry, is being used, it would seem, directly to support a part of the urban population. When the dowries are invested in housing or in small commercial enterprises, many low-salaried employees, civil service workers,

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THE VILLAGES

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than 400 stremmata of cultivated land. Presumably the owner had divided legal title among relatives or friends without surrendering real control of his land.) 423

The village is very small. In 1956 its population was only 130,¹ yet it occupies no less than 6,000 acres, excluding the absentee landowner's estate, which is counted as part of the lands of Lofiscos by official government reckoning. This amounts to more than 46 acres per capita; and even though more than half of the land remains rough pasture, subject to flooding for part of every year, such an abundance of land represents solid wealth by Greek peasant standards. And indeed, the village is wealthy. Farmers find little difficulty in accumulating gold sovereigns with which to dower their daughters, for wheat is always in demand and a government purchase scheme keeps the price stable and well above world market levels. In spite of the shabby appearance of their houses and the untidy appearance of their clothes, the families of Lofiscos are, by their own standards, very well off. Almost all of them probably have several hundred gold sovereigns hidden away, but this no stranger could ever expect to know. 621 423 [162] 161

The tribulations of the second world war, of the occupation and of the guerrilla war made almost no impression on Lofiscos. The young men served in the army, of course, and saw something of the outer world. But on their return they seemed to fit back smoothly into the familiar routine. As the guerrillas never 621 178x 669

1. This and all subsequent figures for village populations are rough approximations. Village records do not include any sort of census figure. They are confined to registration of births, marriages and deaths, and the most important function they serve is to provide the basis for the annual call-up of military recruits. Moreover, a family often remains registered in a village long after it has moved away; in such instances births and deaths are likely to be omitted from the village books, and may or may not be recorded elsewhere. One must therefore depend upon informal estimates of village officials. This leaves a considerable margin for error, unless the officials consulted are unusually careful. [659] 217

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THE VILLAGES

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While I did not come to know the village well enough to be sure, my impression was that the decisive break-through in 1952 was not a matter of new knowledge or information so much as a change in financial attitudes. That is to say, before 1952 the peasants of Lofiscos looked upon indebtedness with horror. Anyone who went to a bank and of his own free will incurred a debt was, they felt, courting disaster. This was not far from the case in the 1920's and early 1930's when agricultural prices were uncertain, bank interest high, and foreclosure a possibility. In 1956 bank interest was still high — between 7 and 8 per cent for loans to individual farmers — but the price of wheat was fixed ahead of time by the government, and the price of fertilizer had been lowered by government subsidy. As a result, a simple computation could assure the borrower of what he stood to gain. This was what the farmers of Lofiscos learned in 1952. They allowed the Bank's representative to convince them that there were times and circumstances when borrowing was not the first step to perdition, but a sure (or nearly sure) way to greater income.

Farming in Lofiscos has always, for as long as men can recall, been mainly directed at market sale. Wheat from the village has gone to Volos or Larissa year after year, and, since 1920 at least, the peasants have been able to buy town products as they wanted them. But in general they have preferred hoarding to spending. In Turkish times, to build a comfortable new house or to dress elaborately would simply have attracted the attention of some hungry tax or rent collector; hence there was a strong motive for concealing behind an unpretentious, indeed poor-seeming, exterior any wealth that might accumulate. This attitude apparently survived under Greek administration, even after the peasants of the village ceased to owe rents to a landlord and secured the whole harvest as their own. It still lingers: hence the shabby appearance of the village and its inhabitants.

If the first important break with old traditional patterns of

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According to his expense accounts he produced 85% of food stuffs and almost all of his seed. This shows how self sufficient the farmer of Megali Vrisi is and if he raised his vegetables too, there would be very few food articles bought from the market.

This representative farmer experiencing the prosperous year of 1934 was able besides spending for construction of a stable and a well, to deposit in the bank 2,000 drs. so as to have them during the lean years.

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Government Subsidy of Wheat Production

During the twentieth century the governments of various countries have introduced certain methods to regulate production, consumption and export. Some of these principles have had temporary successes and some others have failed. These governmental controls have in many instances created social changes and economic difficulties. The adoption of one crop enterprise and the creation of leisure seasons due to prohibition of certain other crops have made it difficult for the farmers to fit themselves in the new scheme of life. By subsidizing the wheat crop and fixing its market price the government has persuaded the farmers to plant only /55/ wheat and neglect rotation and other crops.

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Wheat being a seasonal crop provides ample leisure time for the farmer and thus ample spending periods. He is unable to find anything to occupy his time for something productive and useful in his occupation. Thus many people during the winter months leave the village for outside work. The girls in most cases find work in tobacco districts and the men in road construction. The conditions under which the girls and the men work are very poor and unhealthy, many returning home with poor health. It is a big problem with one crop farming to find something to absorb the leisure time of the farmers.

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The few experiments which were conducted in cooperation with the farmers of raising irrigated alfalfa and vetch and the introduction of dairy farming threw a hopeful light on what could be done to intensify agriculture so as to absorb all the available labor.

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few handmade embroideries. Seldom one finds a bedstead, but
beds nailed together serve as a bedstead.

How is the money spent? The men keep the money and the
account but the women save the money from the eggs and the
poultry which they sell. The man never gives an account to the
wife of how he spends his money. She is supposed to work hard
and should not question how and why the money was spent. The
farmer is interested only in his farm enterprise, that is his oxen,
implements, seed and repair of the buildings. The women are
responsible for the rest. Often conflicts take place due to the
capriciousness of the husband to spend money for clothing of his wife
and children and for food. It is not unusual to find men spend-
ing money for getting drunk or gambling.

Some farmers do spend their money in buying more animals,
implements and improving their poorly built houses. A large part
of the money is spent in buildings. The more the farmer becomes
civilized the more his needs increase.

/33/ Food consumption. The main diet is bread. The people
learned to prepare three kinds of cereal from wheat and barley.
Wheat is hulled and cracked and used for soup with milk. The
wheat is boiled, dried and then finely cracked and used as cereal.
The wheat flour is baked with sour milk and tomato juice, dried
and when pulverized is used for soup. Macaroni is prepared from
wheat flour, dried in the oven and stored for winter.

Besides the above they have dried beans, chick peas, canned
dry cheese. During Christmas they all kill a pig which they
cook and keep it till late in summer. The lard is used for cook-
ing. Since vegetables are plentiful they supplement their basic
foods. Milk is precious and found only during spring and summer
months when pasture is plenty. Eggs and poultry are bought and
are sold on the market. Seldom the family kills a chicken. The
diet centers around wheat products and vegetables. Pickled
cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and bread are the best
combinations for hard work. Olives and olive oil are consumed
daily with bread. The basic fat in cooking is olive oil or linseed
oil.

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